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Harrison, Frederic

New year's address

London

1888

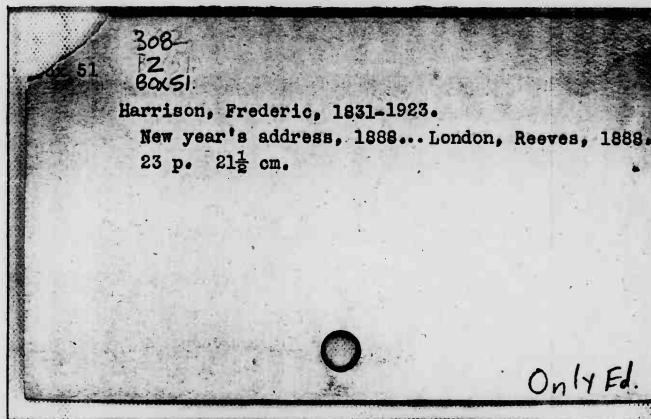
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NEW YEAR'S ADDRESS, 1888.

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BY

FREDERIC HARRISON.

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NEWTON HALL,

FETTER LANE, E.C.



LONDON:

REEVES AND TURNER, 196, STRAND.

1888.

NEWTON HALL.

Day of Humanity,
100.

1 January,
1888.

IN THE NAME OF HUMANITY.

ORDER AND PROGRESS	LIVE FOR OTHERS.
THE PRINCIPLE	LOVE.
THE FOUNDATION	ORDER.
THE END	PROGRESS.

In words which are inscribed on the writings and the tomb of Auguste Comte, we acknowledge that the moving spirit of our lives should be regard for others; for those, first, of our own household and family, for those next of our own country, and lastly, for the whole race of man.

May we all learn to live for others, for only thus do we truly live. To live for others, not for self, is the real happiness of each of us, as it is our plain and simple duty.

But we cannot live truly, unless we also know aright. We must know the world in which our life is placed; we must know the human society of which we are children and members; we must know the mind and spirit of man.

So, too, the very end of life is to press onwards ever to a higher state; towards a truer sense of duty for each of us, a purer form of life for our human kind.

We acknowledge in Humanity, in the Past, the Present, the Future of Man, the source of the best things that we possess, our protector and comforter when evil things threaten us, the end and object of our work and hope.

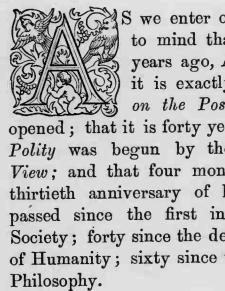
May we, who are met together to-day, shape our lives in public and in private by the light of this unceasing Providence. May the thought of it comfort, guide, and inspire us. May it be about us by day and by night; may it enter into all we do and feel, and may it be present to us in the hour of death.

And now at the opening of another year, let us recall to memory the infinite ages of the Dead, the unnumbered myriads of the Living, and the yet more incalculable host of the generations that are to be.

Let this day be given to Humanity in all the fulness of that word; without restriction of creed, or race, or age, to those who have been, that are, and are to come, in the common bond of human brotherhood.



1888.



AS we enter on the year 1888 we may recall to mind that in this very month, ninety years ago, Auguste Comte was born; that it is exactly sixty years since the *Course on the Positive Philosophy* was regularly opened; that it is forty years since the *System of Positive Polity* was begun by the publication of the *General View*; and that four months only have passed since the thirtieth anniversary of his death. Thirty years have passed since the first independent life of the Positive Society; forty since the definite institution of the Religion of Humanity; sixty since the promulgation of the Positive Philosophy.

I.

The past year has been made noteworthy to us by a second visit from our chief in Paris—M. Pierre Laffitte—not, as when he opened this hall in May, 1881, alone, and with the sole purpose of coming amongst our body; but as leading a body of Positivists who desired to return the visit of fellowship that we made to them in the year preceding, who wished to see the capital of England, the monuments of the past, the chief historic sites, and to

show their respect for the great names in our Calendar whose dust reposes in our city. Here, as in Paris in 1886, our communion of interest and goodwill was expressed in brief speeches alternately English and French, and by the chanting of the French national hymn. The visit of our French brethren may properly be called a Pilgrimage, for it was inspired throughout by historical, social, and religious interests. Our friends visited with us the graves of Cromwell, Milton, Newton, Handel, Goldsmith, Bunyan, De Foe, Fox, and other great names in our annals; the Tower, Guildhall, St. Paul's, the Temple, as well as the Museums and Galleries. By the graceful permission of the Chief Commissioner, they were able to see Westminster Abbey, though at that time closed to the public and much disguised by the Jubilee works. M. Laffitte and his party assured us that their visit could not fail to increase the close and trustful relations which have always existed between the Positivists of London and Paris.

M. Laffitte took occasion during his visit to confer the sacrament of Presentation upon our infant daughter; and all who listened to his beautiful and instructive discourse on the duties of parents and the education of children, must have been struck with the reality, the good sense, the sympathetic humanity of the Human Religion. The rite with which, following the practice of all religions, and indeed of all civilized communities, the infant is formally adopted into the society, is with Positivists naturally disengaged from any kind of supernatural efficacy; it is avowedly addressed to the understanding of the adults, and not to the conferring of any mysterious blessing on the little one. It is simply the first of those occasions and epochs in life which Positivism seizes to impress on the mind the relation of the individual to society, the moral and religious meaning of each successive scene in the drama of life. The easy, practical, affectionate manner in which M. Laffitte presented this simple and beautiful rite was a true model of what Positivist religion may become in its ordinary working.

We have had also to observe, in the only way open to us here, another sacrament, the most central and important of all the epochs of man's life, that of Marriage. Having been legally married before the Registrar, the married pair, with their friends, attended our congregation here. In the absence of anything in the shape of a priesthood amongst us, we made no attempt to imitate the authoritative consecration of the marriage vow by the priest. But in the Positivist view of a Sacrament the consecration of the public act is not a personal ministration by a priest, but a social ceremonial performed in public. The pledge which is taken on behalf of the infant in Presentation, or by the aspirant to a public function at Destination, or by the married pair in Matrimony, is a pledge made, not to an invisible power, not to any priest as the representative of some mysterious power, but a pledge given by the persons in question face to face with the community. It has been asked from time to time—how, in the absence of a priest, a Presentation, or a Destination, or a religious Marriage, is possible? But in our rational and practical view of religious life, a religious marriage is the act of those who, with solemn purpose and with due sincerity, declare in the presence of the congregation to which they belong, that they are entering on the state of wedlock in a religious spirit, and with full sense of its infinite social meanings.

In such a case the lay spokesman of the community has no part to fulfil, except to record the vows of the married pair in the name of and as expressing the voice of the community, and to do his best to remind those present of the sacred obligations of the married state. The Religion of Humanity will assuredly do nothing to impair the religious character of Marriage as a sacrament, or to deprive it of its beauty as a religious rite. On the contrary, it will do much to increase both. Whilst there is so great a tendency in modern democracies to loosen the indissoluble character of Marriage, to cast off its religious aspect, and to annihilate the specially spiritual functions of the wife, it lies at the very root of all Positivist principles to strengthen

and amplify these sides of Marriage. And yet whilst standing apart from all the secularist schools in holding up firmly the religious aspect of Marriage, we stand apart from all the theological schools in equally respecting the civil aspect of Marriage as the basis, and indeed the only indispensable foundation of true wedlock. And thus, whilst the secularist and materialist schools of thought are loudly repudiating any religious rite in Marriage, and whilst the theological schools are struggling to suppress or supersede any civil rite of Marriage, we stand alone in honouring alike the civil marriage and the religious marriage; and we alone insist that the former is quite as necessary and quite as social as the other—that civil rite and religious rite are both essential to marriage, and should be kept perfectly distinct and held in equal honour.

The same view of the ceremony will doubtless prevail in the burial of the Dead; and it was observed on the burial of one of our friends in the group at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. So long as Baptism, Marriage, Ordination, and Burial were regarded as acts of mystical, and almost mechanical potency, whereby an ordained priest miraculously communicated some divine blessing, so long the rite could only be looked on as a single and indivisible transaction—having only one side, and that one vague, and more or less incomprehensible. As the real and social conception of these cardinal epochs in our life gets more and more familiar, these various ceremonies and rites are coming to be separated into their natural and component elements, and the personal, the family, or the legal element is easily detached from the social, the religious, or the national element. It is becoming more and more common in the case of those who have public services to commend them, to hold commemorative services for the Dead, distinct from the ceremony of actual interment. We recently paid in this Hall a just tribute to Sir George Macfarren, the eminent musician, who, without being one of our body, at times attended our meetings, and was associated with us by many ties of sympathy and affection. Those of us who were

present at the beautiful commemorative service in Westminster Abbey on the day of his Funeral, could not fail to notice, in the Music which gave that service so much affecting dignity, in the social and national tribute paid to a life of devotion both to Art and to Duty, and also in the Commemorative Sermon of the Dean, how much the natural current of modern sentiment prefigures the Positivist ideal of the Sacrament of the Future.

We have fully maintained and even extended in the past year another of those ancient institutions which Positivism seeks to revive and amplify. I mean the practice of making Pilgrimage, or visiting the spots consecrated by eminent men and great events, with a conscious purpose of impressing on the spirit of those who join, the historic, social, and religious lessons of the past. In these days of so much idle sight-seeing and aimless touring, and also of so much superstitious prostration before objects which commemorate nothing but ignorance and imposture, it is most essential to revive the practice of visiting spots really consecrated by great memories, and studying them in a spirit at once scientific and reverent. Those who have been with our parties have seen that it is perfectly possible to join in our pilgrimages without affectation and without levity. "What is a pilgrimage?" the jesters often ask. Well, it is perfectly simple. A pilgrimage is not a mere holiday excursion; because its direct object is to call out our feelings of veneration for noble lives and great deeds, to extend our knowledge of them, and to stimulate our sense of reverence. It is not a mechanical act of artificial worship; because with us it is throughout directed towards sound historical education and a healthy love of Humanity and Nature.

The visit of our French friends to London was thus to many of us, as to them, a prolonged Pilgrimage. So, again, was our visit to Cambridge, to Ely, and to Huntingdon, where the very soil and the buildings abound in associations with Newton, Milton, Cromwell, as well as Bacon, Spenser, and Byron. In the same spirit we have visited

the grave of John Locke at High Laver, of Goldsmith in the Temple, and have also made the British Museum and the National Gallery the scene of visits and of lectures. In these courses, taking *seriatim* some section of these great collections, we have endeavoured to learn the lessons of history and art which they contain, whilst at the same time doing justice to the sense of gratitude and reverence which the works of great artists and the achievements of great men must in every healthy mind continually inspire.

The energy of Mr. Descours has kept up throughout the past year classes in French both here and in North London; and our singing-class has worked steadily under Mr. Shore to good effect. We hope soon to have an appropriate collection of Hymns and Anthems, by making a selection out of the various pieces which have been tried and approved. An Organ has been recently presented to our Hall by four members of our body; and it is hoped that it will be a means of stimulating the choir in their work, and perhaps of adding to their number. Mr. Higginson intends with the new year to commence a course of Wednesday lectures on the methods and logic of the sciences. The women's guild, which has now been in existence for three years, has met regularly during the year; and it proposes to hold in February the children's gathering which has taken place the last two years. We have continued the reading and explanation of the "General View of Positivism." The Political Society, under the presidency of Professor Beesly, and the social meetings have continued their work month by month throughout the year. And it is now proposed to form another class for the reading of the great books in the Positivist Library.

II.

In Politics it has hardly been possible to address public opinion on any question but the burning question of Ireland. On that several of us have sought to maintain the principles which as a body we have asserted for twenty

years: a separate government for Ireland in harmony with her national traditions, but subject to Imperial union; and this principle we have tried to maintain without any reference to party contests or to the parliamentary schemes and tactics of the hour. I know not how better to sum up the conclusions at which the Positivist Society, after ample discussion, arrived—conclusions from which Mr. Cock and Mr. Lock dissented, but in which I heartily concurred, and in which I unflinchingly concur still—than by quoting the concluding sentences of the measured and thoughtful paper which Professor Beesly put out during the passing of the Coercion Bill in the name of the Society. That masterly appeal, dated 6th May last, ends thus: "The election of eighty-five Home Rulers in Ireland, and the consequent acceptance of Home Rule by the Liberal Party in Great Britain, makes the ultimate triumph of that policy certain. Coercion, designed to impede and delay the only possible solution of the Irish difficulty, is purely mischievous. Any Conservative government worthy of the name would have availed itself of its possession of office to carry through the inevitable change of relations between England and Ireland in a deliberate, well-considered, and orderly manner. Had Lord Salisbury done so, we who repudiate party ties should have given him our hearty sympathy and support. But he is pursuing a hopeless policy in a way calculated to inflame revolutionary passion, and to squander and use up the forces on either side still available for the maintenance of strong and stable government."

How completely has the experience of eight months justified these words! How hopeless is this policy now seen to be! How truly are the revolutionary passions inflamed by it! How wantonly it wastes the conservative forces on either side! The policy of arbitrary violence is contenting no one, solving no problem, founding nothing. And how idle it is even from its own point of view! In a country like ours, where the whole of civil society rests on old elective institutions; where the common law knows nothing of the Continental theory of an irresponsible executive; where

every official is responsible to courts of laws and to juries; amongst a people long versed in all the democratic habits of free speech, free press, and elected authorities, the attempt to govern on Russian or Turkish methods can be nothing but a farce. The amiable Mr. Balfour is only masquerading in the sword and helmet of Cromwell. His most reckless acts of violence are only drawing-room parodies of what the Mouravieffs did at Warsaw, the Haynaus in Hungary, and the Radetzskys at Milan. Unless the whole scheme of law and government is recast—unless all the existing civil guarantees of the citizen, and all the civil liabilities of the governors, and with them all elective institutions, and all established ways of expressing public opinion, are systematically suppressed as they are in Russia or Turkey—and then unless all opposition is ruthlessly stamped out in blood and fire—unless this is done, the attempt to silence the great majority of a brave nation, who are in a state of permanent insurrection, is not serious statesmanship, but a criminal escapade. Before Ireland can be subdued, every printed sheet must be subjected to rigid censorship, every meeting of ten persons must be dispersed by police, every elective office of any kind must be filled by arbitrary nomination, and every man in authority must be placed above the law. And long before this Muscovite system is established, every Englishman living in Ireland, and the whole of what is called the loyalist minority in Ireland, will be crying out passionately against such intolerable tyranny; for it must necessarily affect them and all their habits and ideas. And what, all this time, will the English people be saying?

It is a great satisfaction to us to feel that entire cordiality exists between the various groups of Positivists in England, and indeed in Europe. In spite of some personal differences, which time is happily effacing, and although many of us take very various views as to the best mode of presenting and promoting Positivist principles, so far as I know there is at the present moment nothing but goodwill amongst the great bulk of those who in different places and

in sundry ways acknowledge the Religion of Humanity. I am speaking indeed of Europe, for I can hardly take seriously the proceedings of some youthful enthusiasts of South America. Here, in England and in France, we have only good wishes for the various groups which are seeking to promote the Positivist faith. For the most important of these in England—for the oldest of all the English groups, that which meets in Chapel Street under the direction of Dr. Congreve, the earliest systematic exponent of Auguste Comte in England; for that in Liverpool, directed by Dr. Carson—it is not necessary for me to speak, inasmuch as they have abundant means of giving an account of themselves. But there are two bodies especially in filiation with our own, that at North London and that at Manchester, of which a few words must be said. The Manchester group, in spite of the removal from that city of several of its most active leaders, has successfully carried on its work for the year, mainly by the aid of our friend, Mr. Higginson, who is doing so much for our cause both here, in North London, and in Manchester. On the work and the future career of Mr. Higginson we all feel the deepest interest and the most lively hope; for he is at present doing as much in amount for the spread of Positivism as perhaps all the rest of us put together, and he is also the only one of our number whose entire and undivided energies have been for some time directly devoted to that end.

Our North London friends have with remarkable energy carried on their meetings throughout the year, under the zealous direction of Dr. Kaines. The courses of lectures on Sundays have been maintained side by side with our own. There are classes for French under Mr. Descours, a singing-class, an elementary Sunday afternoon school conducted by Mr. Moore and Mr. Price, a series of social evenings, discussions at the Positivist Society, and a scheme of Pilgrimages in the summer months.

I am very far from putting before you this account of our community as a thing for boasting or pride, or indeed as an adequate attempt to live up to our principles and

ideals. I am simply stating the facts, with no wish to present them in any optimist spirit, and with no wish to dogmatize as to the right means of increasing our activity. Very different counsels are continually offered to us; very various views are put forward as to the best means of promoting the Positive system. We are told by some that the Positivist scheme is not a bare emotional principle, but a philosophic synthesis, and that until an adequate body of thinkers and teachers are organized to carry on its intellectual task of co-ordinating the laws of thought, its whole future may disappear in vague and dispersive enthusiasm. We are told by others that the ideal and emotional side of the Religion of Humanity is the one thing needful to insist on; that the immediate necessity is to organize in as definite and complete a manner as possible the direct worship of Humanity and the practical realization in literal forms of the religious ideal of Comte. I am not about to dogmatize, or to advocate either of these views. I am not inclined myself to put aside either one or the other. No one can feel more profoundly than I do, that the whole justification of Positivism, the one thing which can justify us in meeting here in this Hall, which can justify any of us in presuming to advocate a new view of religion, is that our bond of union is a real, scientific, demonstrable conception of Nature and of Man; and further, that we have amongst us those who are prepared to make good that claim, and to organize the teaching of it on a permanent, consistent, and productive method. Positivism starts with Positive Philosophy; and, till that is assured, nothing is sure.

Yet I am quite as clear, that to set ourselves simply to study the laws of Nature and Man, to resolve the Positivist community into a mere Institute for popular classes, to adjourn all idea of realizing in practice a community held together by a vital faith in Humanity until we had all been sufficiently grounded in Cosmology and Sociology, would be indefinitely to adjourn the appearance of Positivism as a religion. We who are not at all prepared to look for any

ultimate realization of Comte's religious Utopia in all its details and features, are inclined to leave to the future the complete constitution of the religion of Humanity. We must wait for a far larger society of Positivists, a far more definite public opinion, and a far greater preparation in the general public, before the ultimate type of Human religion can be effectively settled. But in the meantime we cannot wrap up the great conception of Auguste Comte in a napkin and hide it in the earth, till some distant day arrives. We must do our best to make it productive and useful, to give it currency among men.

Let us, then, resist all temptation to form a sect with a separate life and an exclusive spirit. For a long time to come Positivism can only exist in a healthy way by working along with the most vigorous and humane kindred movements which it finds around it. In any case, we have the consolation of feeling that we are not pursuing any mere fiction, and wasting our lives over an imaginary good. We cannot be wrong in trying to know more of Nature and of Man. We must be right in trying to cultivate a more social spirit and a more reverent feeling for the great men of the past, to gain a truer sense of what we ought to know, and how much we ourselves come short of our knowledge.

No one who comes here is asked to deny anything, or to abjure anything, nor is any coherent belief or doctrine assailed. We do nothing to foment a doubting, disputatious, or rebellious temper. Those who come here, come because they find their convictions strengthened, not because they find them undermined. There is nothing said or done here, I make bold to say, which good and sensible men of any school of thought cannot welcome and take part in. Even if the priests of the theologies find that we omit or pass over in silence much that they think spiritual and essential to religion, they do not deny that what we do and say is humane, social, and moral, so far as it goes. Thus, even if our claim were, as the priests assure us, mistaken; if our ideal of a useful life and a good education were not, as we think it to be, true religion in itself;

still, what we do seek is by common consent an excellent thing in itself. There is this solid ground of confidence in the Positivist faith: that it never separates us from good men and good women everywhere; that it enforces nothing which the wise of all religions condemn; that, even if it be not, as we trust it is, the best and the highest aim for man, it is an aim both good and high; its ethical standard has never been doubted or suspected; its religious standard has never been declared to be mythical or evil. All that we are told is, that, however excellent morally, it is not religion. That remains to be seen. In the meantime, we have a body of men and of women—may I not say?—who are happy and feel stronger in meeting here, who have found in Positivism a practical and humane bond of union, who are gaining some solid knowledge here, who get higher ideas of science, history, art, who are getting clearer notions of duty, who are morally stronger, and in all ways happier.

Positivism, therefore, in no way tends to draw us out of the world, as the dream of mystical Christianity enjoins; but rather it encourages us to work along with the world in all right and practical ways. And in nothing is this stronger than in the practical work of Charity. We are from time to time urged by some of our friends to form here a special movement of our own of a charitable and benevolent kind, and something of the kind has been attempted as occasion seemed to require. Assuredly we do not acknowledge the duty of practical help to the needy, to be a whit less essential to human religion than it has always been held to be to supernatural religion. If our faith in Humanity did not do something to make us more humane, if it even did less to make us humane than the faith in Heaven, it would indeed be a bitter mockery and delusion. But experience has shown us that our community here is but little fitted to form the nucleus of any special benevolent movement. We are greatly separated in space; we who meet here do not reside near one another, or near this place; and we have no local contact whatever with

those who do. We have nothing parochial, nothing local, about our union at all. The tie which binds us together is spiritual, not material, and for practical work in common we are separated by hard material obstacles. All this points to the fact that we must join with our own neighbours, with the existing local organizations, if we would do anything practical, and not attempt to found any special organization here. I myself take part in and subscribe to the local institutions, charities, hospitals, and funds, in my own district and parish; and I recommend you each of you to do the same thing. We have to remember that talk about Humanity is indeed a miserable hypocrisy, unless it bear practical fruits in a humarer life; that, unless our Positive Faith can succeed in making us more actively useful in life, we had better put off all study of the teaching of Auguste Comte until we have learned the simplest lessons of the Gospel, the elementary gospel of charity in the Sermon on the Mount and the Epistles to the Corinthians. The moral exhortations of Jesus, and the social precepts of Paul, belong to us as much as to any Christian Church. Their Bible is part of our Bible; and in the matter of Christian charity it can be no part of Positivism to take away one jot or one tittle, but in every reasonable way to accept it and to give it fresh meaning and volume, on a truly scientific and social basis.

III.

Some of our friends are much exercised by the doubt whether our movement in England and in France is advancing with the rapidity which we might desire and expect. I am not myself very much concerned with this question. It does not very much occupy my thoughts. I have given it no very definite answer; and whatever answer I gave to it would not alter my own action a hair's breadth. We are doing what seems to us best; and the issue is with Humanity. The nature of our movement is such as to exclude any very rapid progress in it. We in no way en-

courage those things which might lead to rapid progress on the surface. And we are deeply convinced that very much of the real progress made is such as we are not likely to see or to know.

Consider what Positivism is. It is an attempt to transfer religion in the nineteenth century of the Christian era from a supernatural to a scientific basis, from a theological to a human creed. What a stupendous change!—undoubtedly the most important in the history of the human mind. And it involves two sides, at first sight contradictory of each other. The one is the complete surrender of the whole supernatural and theological mode of thought—the other the revival, or rather the immense amplification, of the religious tone of mind. Positivism thus, with one hand, has to carry to its furthest limits the abandonment of the supernatural and the theological field which marks the last hundred years of man's activity, and yet, with the other hand, it has to stem the tide of materialism and anti-religious passion, and to assert for religion a far larger part than ever it had before. Thus it finds all the religious spirits very slow to surrender the supernatural, and it finds all the scientific and positive minds very loth to accept any kind of religion at all. A movement which has aims apparently so irreconcilable can only find prepared minds here and there to accept it. Yet its very strength lies in this: that it is the only possible reconciliation of two indomitable tendencies, equally deep-rooted in the modern mind.

Again, the very nature of the Positivist scheme excludes anything like a rapid conversion to its system. It consists not of an idea, an impulse, or single doctrine, but of a great mass of solid doctrines in positive knowledge, mixed up with a complete scheme of trained feeling and of practical discipline. No philosophy, no religion, was ever so weighted before. In the whole history of religious progress, no religion ever presented itself requiring almost for its comprehension a solid general education. And no philosophy in the whole history of the human mind ever came forward inseparably interwoven with a worship for the

heart and a code of practical duty for the conduct. A new philosophical conception, like that of Gravitation, the permutation of Energy, or Evolution, makes way rapidly, and gains over the public assent of a generation, because it is a simple scientific conception, which the public accepts on faith from the very small number of competent reasoners whom it is accustomed to trust. A political movement like Free Trade, Manhood Suffrage, Home Rule, or Socialism, makes a party for itself rapidly and noisily, because it offers an immediate practical result, which seems capable of conferring in a tangible form direct profit or power. Positivism has none of these conditions, and has to make way in a wholly different manner. It does not seek, like other forms of religion, to be accepted on impulse, under a sudden gush of religious excitement. It asks to be accepted as the result of a great body of convergent convictions, or not to be accepted at all. Being a religion, it is not a thing to be decided by experts. Every heart must feel it for itself; every brain must reason it out for itself. Nor, like a political movement, does it seek to form a party, a militant league, or a revolution. It never appeals to the instinct of combat; it inflames no egoistic passion; it panders to no destructive spirit; it never calls out the thirst to deny, to decry, to ridicule, and to pull down. It offers nothing immediate, or even near at hand. It perpetually asserts that social remedies must be very gradual, very complicated, spiritual and moral rather than practical and legislative. It discourages all immediate and direct remedies; and for ever preaches up the slow, the indirect, the difficult and humble method of gradual progress by personal improvement and moral education. Now the spirits which are prepared to sacrifice all their impatient hopes, all royal roads to the millennium, and all revolutionary dreams for establishing Utopia, at latest in the twentieth century—such spirits are few and rare.

All forms of religion of whose origin we know the history have come recommending themselves by signs and wonders, by miraculous evidences, by divine revelations and super-

natural credentials, which confound the imagination, superheat the emotions, and paralyze the reasoning powers. Gibbon and Voltaire found the origin of all religions, whether those of Christ, Mahomet, Bouddha, Calvin, Knox, or Wesley, in force, fraud, or cerebral disease. We most certainly should not so state it; but it remains most evident that no religion has ever trusted to demonstration presented to the really trained mind. For the first time in the annals of religion, Positivism presents it as a reasoned and scientific conviction, branching out into a complex scheme of social institutions, with an entire code of practical conduct. From the nature of the case a scheme of religion so presented must make way by the silent, indirect, and permeating method, and not by miracle and with observation, and with thousands added to the Church at each eloquent sermon.

In its growth, in its working, in its whole character and effect, the human type of religion must essentially differ from the theological type. It will have nothing of the violent, ecstatic, sensational character which seems inherent in Monotheism. Theology is, intellectually considered, a childlike phase of religion—using childlike in its finer sense, to mark a condition of mind full of naïveté, credulity, mobility, and quick revulsion of feeling. Positivism is an adult and mature phase of religion, primarily addressed to adults, to men and women of formed character and trained understanding. It is a manly and a womanly religion, full of manly and womanly associations. To receive the Positive gospel it is not necessary to become as a little child. Rather, it is necessary, to grasp it fully, to be a man and a woman complete in intelligence, in heart, and in energy. Hence it must grow gradually, work equably, and be marked by endurance, reserve, good sense, completeness, much more than by passion, fanaticism, and ecstatic self-abandonment.

People familiar with the hysterical ebullitions of Evangelical Christianity and the morbid spiritualism of Catholic mysticism ask us, with confident contempt, if Positivism has

any such resources to rouse and overawe the spirit, any such tremendous sanctions, any such spasmodic beatitudes, humiliations, and consolations which the gospels and the hagiologies offer, any transcendental mysticism like the Imitation of Christ, any beatific visions such as Dante and Bunyan saw, and such as Jeremy Taylor and Wesley preached. And some Methodist Boanerges, or some smart pupil of the Jesuits, asks, with no little expenditure of contemptuous epigram, “Do you call that religion, without Heaven or Hell, or Beatific vision, or Creation, or Ruler of the Universe, without divine inspiration, revelation, miracle, or supernatural machinery of any kind?” Yes! we answer; you are thinking of religion in its early unsystematic phase. All these things are not permanent; they are not necessary nor even tolerable in the grown and educated stage of civilization! The religion of savages is a fierce and even bloody superstition. The religion of an early civilization is less fierce, but is still a mass of extravagance and unreality. The Mosaic and Mahometan Monotheisms were relatively less fierce, but very far from sober or rational. Christianity was an immense advance in humane sobriety and rational morality. And the history of Christianity is one long story of the gradual substitution of humanity and sense for supernaturalism and fiction. But the process has not gone nearly far enough yet; and with any theological basis at all it never can be carried far enough. Religion can never satisfy the adult stage of man’s civilization until it is rational from top to bottom, evenly-balanced all round, under complete self-control, and always in harmony with thorough manliness and true culture.

A religion so constituted will necessarily lose much of its intensity, its exciting, overpowering, and ecstatic character. There will be fewer agonies, tears, groans, prostrations, raptures, self-tortures, and sublime assurances. All that belongs to the childlike stage. Children have to be educated by rewards and punishments, prizes, disgraces, and so forth. Men and women do not need these things;

but revolt from them. But what religion loses in intensity it will gain in constancy, solidity, and breadth. In the Middle Ages Christianity rested on hopes and fears, supernatural agents, horrors, and sublimities, which are now become puerile or disgusting even to devout Christians. So, when a human religion is solidly established, the Heaven and Hell, the revelations and soul agitation so precious to the devout Christian of to-day, will be puerile or disgusting to the rational mind. Not that the conscience will be less sensitive. On the contrary, it will be far more reasonable, far more alert, and much more sound, just because it does not pass from hysterical rapture to imaginary terror, and from both to a state of exhaustion and torpor. Religion, instead of being a thing of transcendental hopes and fears, stimulated once a week on Sundays, and in some occasional half-hour alone, will be a body of solid convictions and moral habits, perfectly in a line with all the rest of human life, and applying naturally to everything we do or say.

Religion, on a human basis, will be, I conceive, a thing wholly unlike the orthodox Catholicism of the twelfth century or the orthodox Puritanism of the seventeenth century; unlike in spirit, in result, and in its mode of propagation. In some ways it will much more resemble the ancient type of religion than Christianity—the ancient type, I mean, where religion was more a thing of the citizen's daily life than a thing for church on Sunday. It will be much more like what we call morality; will be more social than personal, more civic than domestic, and more practical than mystical. We do not exclude the personal, the domestic, the mystical element. The soul will have its hours of solitary meditation and exaltation; the family will join in natural expression of veneration and love; there will be seasons of fervid imagination and passionate ecstasy; but they will hold their due place, and will never pass out of the control of the reason and the sobering claims of active duty. It will be rather, to use a current phrase, "morality touched with emotion"—the morality being our

duty as taught by sociology, and emotion being our loyalty to Humanity in all its phases and works. Such a religion, I conceive, will more savour of the tone of mind taught by Socrates, Confucius, and Marcus Aurelius, than that taught by Augustine and Aquinas, Luther and Calvin.

Attention to this will correct many misconceptions and answer much idle criticism. Take, as an example, that of the Priesthood, or the Educators. How preposterously have their numbers and their influence been exaggerated by critics! According to Comte's ideal, there were not more than 20,000 Priests required for all Western Europe—less than 4,000 for the United Kingdom—not 500 for the whole existing Metropolitan area. And these priests in his Utopia were to take the place of the clergy of all denominations, the directors of universities and schools, the leading professors, the chief consulting physicians, and the newspaper editors—classes who in England must number at least 100,000. I am not now considering how far Comte's Utopia could be worked out—it is to me a suggestion, a Utopia merely. But it enables us to see what he meant by a Priesthood. There are now in the United Kingdom at least 40,000 clergy, nearly half of whom are of the Church of England. Now Comte proposed a Priesthood of less than 4,000, *i.e.*, not one-tenth of this number—about one-fifth of the clergy of the Church of England, about one-fifth of the Dissenting Ministers, and barely twice as numerous as the Catholic Priests now are in England alone. This, in Comte's ideal, was to be the only organized religious corporation. Every other kind of spiritual direction he would leave absolutely free. One can see how idle are fears about priesthood and spiritual tyranny as relating to a body which over the whole Metropolitan area would be less than 500 in number.

Take his ideal of the Temples of the Future. They would be less than 400 for the United Kingdom—say about 50 for the whole actual Metropolitan area—that is, about one for each 70,000 inhabitants, for each 10,000 families, each Temple being the seat of ten priests. Now here again I

say nothing as to the possibility of realizing this Utopia. But it is clear that Comte meant something quite different from the multiplicity of churches and chapels, of priests, ministers, and their staff, such as we now know. He evidently conceived an immense reduction of the whole clerical element and of the practice of congregational worship. As he imagined it the Temple was a combination of cathedral, museum, university, high school, public library, lecture hall, and mechanics' institute. In place of the church and chapel, with half-a-dozen curates and ministers, in every third street as we see it now, he conceived a grand central Temple in each district about the area of our Metropolitan boroughs—a Temple capable of holding at least 10,000 persons—something, I imagine, like the Oratory at Brompton, in my opinion the most masculine and dignified type of the modern church. With such a Temple I can imagine combined a sort of People's Palace, with halls for music, for choral singing, with libraries, class-rooms, and art museums. Congregational worship under such conditions would resemble much more a Handel Festival, or an Evening Service in St. Paul's Cathedral, than the two or three daily celebrations, as they call it, now common in church and chapel. Much of what we call worship would be transferred to the Home; the citizen, the householder, the father, would, as of old, take the part of Priest. Congregational worship would largely consist of artistic public festivals on fixed occasions. But the ordinary Priest and Priestess would be each Father and Mother.

But all this is for the Future. It is little enough that we of this generation can do to realize the conception of Comte, and perhaps almost nothing to determine its ultimate form. But we can all do something to make ourselves a little more worthy to partake of his ideal, at least so far as to get some sounder knowledge of real things, to live a life more social, more pure, and more humane. It is the rare privilege of Positivism that to follow its precepts is to do what by the common consent of mankind is a good thing in itself. We never can feel that we have believed a lie

if we are striving to do our duty in our homes, in our business, and amongst our fellow-citizens, in the spirit of respect for all great and good men who have gone before us, in the spirit of charity towards the living organs of Humanity to-day, and in the spirit of hope for those who will bear the inheritance of Humanity in the greater Future that is to be.



By the same Author.

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